

Katherine

The shrew of the play's title, and the oldest daughter of Baptista Minola and sister of Bianca. Katherine, who is also called Katherina or Kate, is extremely strong-willed. She insists upon saying whatever she thinks and expressing whatever she feels. Her words are abusive and angry, and her actions are often violent. In Shakespeare's time, women like Katherine were called shrews, and they were strongly disapproved of as the worst possible kind of women. Petruchio undertakes the challenge of taming her, turning her into an obedient and pleasant wife.

Petruchio

A wealthy gentleman from Verona. Loud, boisterous, eccentric, and quick-witted, Petruchio comes to Padua to increase his fortune by marrying rich. All he wants is a bride with an enormous dowry, and Katherine fits the bill. Though everyone else warns him against trying to marry Katherine, he sets out to tame her by pitting his own violent temper against hers.

Baptista Minola

A wealthy citizen of Padua, and the father of Katherine and Bianca. Though many men want to marry Bianca, Baptista refuses to allow Bianca to marry before Katherine, whom no one wants to marry. Baptista is good-hearted and generous toward his two daughters, lavishing expensive books and lessons upon them, but he is completely at a loss for how to deal with the strong-willed Katherine.

Bianca

The younger daughter of Baptista. The opposite of her sister Katherine, Bianca is soft-spoken, sweet, and unassuming, as well as beautiful. Because of her large dowry and her mild behavior, several men compete for her hand.

Lucentio

A young nobleman from Pisa who comes to Padua to study at the city's renowned university, but who is immediately sidetracked when he falls in love with Bianca at first sight. Good-natured and intrepid, Lucentio is the most sympathetic of Bianca's suitors. He disguises himself as a classics instructor named Cambio so he can gain access to Bianca and win her love.

Tranio

Lucentio's servant, who accompanies Lucentio from Pisa. Wily and comical, Tranio plays an important part in Lucentio's charade by pretending to be Lucentio and bargaining with Baptista for Bianca's hand.

Gremio and Hortensio

Two older gentlemen of Padua who want to marry Bianca. Although they are rivals, they become allies because of their mutual frustration with and rejection by Bianca. Hortensio is an old friend of Petruchio's, and he suggests Katherine as a possible wife for Petruchio. He then dresses up as a music instructor to court Bianca. Hortensio and Gremio are both thwarted by Lucentio in their efforts to win Bianca.

Grumio

Petruchio's servant and the fool of the play. He provides comic relief by pretending to misunderstand Petruchio and getting into ridiculous arguments with him.

Curtis, Nathaniel, Phillip, Joseph, Nicholas, Peter

Servants in Petruchio's household.

Tailor, Haberdasher

The dress-maker and hat-maker hired by Petruchio to dress Katherine. Petruchio criticizes their work and sends them away, as part of his scheme to tame Katherine.

Widow

A wealthy widow of Padua whom Hortensio marries after abandoning his attempt to marry Bianca.

Vincentio (Very old man)

An older man Petruchio and Katherine meet on the street. Petruchio tries to convince Katherine that the older man is really a maid. This is a tactic only used to try and get Katherine to submit to Petruchio. The old man really turns out to be Lucentio's real father who is searching for him.